
The Role Of Code Of Ethics For a Professional

People are all held to certain expectations and obligations. Students in grade school are expected to do their homework, study for and take tests, and handle social interactions all the while being governed by the morals that have been instilled in them by their families and other influences. From school into adulthood, people begin to form their own opinions. They break away from those who have supported them in the past and use their own judgment to make decisions. College students are expected to oblige by the expectations laid out for them in the school's student handbook. Similarly, employees in their respective careers, have their codes of ethics laid out for them to help guide them through their practice and decision making. It is so important to know what is expected of one and to be familiar with the guidelines that will help one be successful.

Baker College students are held to many of the same standards as other colleges. For example, cheating, plagiarism, and fraud are all violations of the student handbook. Students are expected to turn in their own, original work, using permitted resources, while properly citing those sources. If one were to use another's work as a resource, it is critical to cite it in order to give the original author the credit due. It is also important to recognize that one turning in unoriginal work would not be the only violator in the situation. If someone were to let a classmate copy their work or complete an assignment for a classmate, that person is also going to be facing the consequences of an honor code violation. Allowing the classmate to cheat makes one just as guilty as the one cheating. Consequences for handbook violations tend to vary from school to school and are presented according to the severity of the violation. At Baker College there are four possible outcomes: failing the assignment, failing of the class, being expelled from the school, or having a certificate or degree taken away.

In accordance with most colleges, consequences for honor code violations are up to the instructor to commission. Student handbooks are helpful to guide the students in what the school expects from them while they work towards earning their degree. More specifically, Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) students at Baker College are expected to perform at a certain level. For example, all of the prerequisite classes for the program must be passed with an 80% or better. Once accepted into the program, students will be required to obtain a specific number of fieldwork hours. While in their fieldwork placements, students are expected to uphold the professional standards that are set out in the Student Handbook. According to the Student Handbook, students are to respect other's rights and property, practice good manners, be honest and respectful, and abide by federal, state, and local laws. Failing to follow these professional standards will result in educational mentoring sessions, suspension, expulsion, and/or criminal prosecution.

Although abiding by these standards may seem simple, that means that the student must observe, practice, and then complete assignments without violating any HIPAA guidelines. HIPAA, or the Health Insurance Portability and Accountable Act, is a federal law that is used to protect the personal information of those receiving health care. As a practitioner, HIPAA means that no health care practitioner outside of the ones directly working with a patient needs to access or view that patient's personal health information. This also means that a practitioner that is working with a patient cannot disclose any identifiable health information to others

outside that patient's care team. Identifiable health information is defined as anything that may identify a patient; this includes demographic information, name, address, birthdate, medical history, social security number, and medical conditions. This not only includes the workplace but also personal conversation and social media platforms as well. If one was unsure about whether or not something is protected health information, it's best to not say or post anything at all. HIPAA not only applies to health care professionals, but it also applies to OTA students while they are out in their fieldworks. Even as a student it is so important to be familiar with HIPAA regulations and to be cautious of what is said or written when discussing one's fieldwork experiences.

HIPAA violations are taken very seriously. Violations can have either civil or criminal penalties. A practitioner that has violated HIPAA is subject to revoking of licensure, fines varying from \$100 to \$50,000 with a maximum of \$1.5 million a year, and/or jail time. Even though the most common violations are accidental, they are still subject to the consequences. It is important to be familiar with these consequences because they discourage any violations, accidental or not. Penalties, like the ones associated with HIPAA violations, encourage safety when handling any protected health information. In addition to HIPAA, it is also wise to orient one's self with other aspects that will be expected of them. Seeing as OTA students are working to become entry-level practitioners, it is important that they begin to govern their decisions and actions by the occupational therapy code of ethics. The American Occupational Therapy Association, or AOTA, states that OTAs should: not inflict harm or injury, recognize and take appropriate actions to solve personal limitations, avoid conflicts of interest, not exploit any relationship, respect the clients right to refuse therapy, fully disclose all benefits, risks and potential outcomes, maintain confidentiality, and refrain from any romantic relationships with clients, client families, or employees. These ethical standards are very basic and are intended to protect the client and promote the best care possible. When an OTA is unsure when decision making, they should first consult the code of ethics to confirm which option is most ethical. If the OTA still has any uncertainties, it is always a safe bet to check in with the OTR as the OTA is working directly under them and their actions reflect on the OTR.

It is a great idea to orient one's self with the code of ethics and/or facility expectation when beginning work in a new facility. Having a clear view of how one is expected to practice will ensure the safe and ethical treatment of clients. The whole point of ethics is to provide a baseline for quality and suitable care. If one was unsure of anything they should always tap into their resources and do what is necessary to become successful.